January/February/March 1996 Volume 21, Number 1

A summary of recent news stories from the University of California San Francisco

UCSF

To Our Neighbors

New drug cures most nail infections

For 10 years, San Francisco nursing student Hal Turrentine wore socks with his sandals because his toenails were "unsightly," he says. Now, thanks to a promising new drug vigorously tested at UCSF, Turrentine no longer hides his feet in embarrassment. The drug — itraconazole — was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in October.

"I had fungal nail disease and tried nearly everything to treat it," he says, "but the condition only worsened to where I was uncomfortable standing on my feet all day at work."

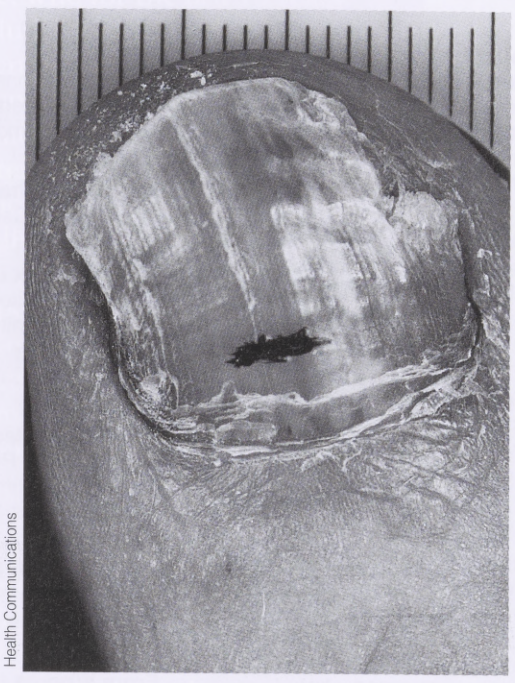
"Many patients have lived for years with the pain and humiliation of nails destroyed by fungal nail disease because little could be done for them," says dermatologist and microbiologist Raza Aly, PhD, who conducted the clinical trial of the drug at UCSF.

"Itraconazole is the first therapy to offer patients hope by providing a high level of efficacy in about one-fifth of the treatment time of other current therapies," he says.

Traditionally, with nail infection comes long treatment periods, drugs that show minimal results, and side effects such as gastrointestinal upset, headaches, taste disturbance and photosensitivity, according to Aly.

"Itraconazole is more effective, causes few side effects, and has a shorter treatment period than other oral agents used to treat nail disease," says Aly. The drug is active against parasitic fungi like the kind that infects the toenails. Taken orally, the drug metabolizes in the liver and is distributed extensively to tissues.

"The drug gets into the nail bed quickly and remains there for up to six months after the treatment period ends," Aly says. "Depending on the dosage, the treatment period usually lasts up to three months."



Health Communications

Fungal nail disease is the most common nail disorder, affecting nearly 11 million Americans' toenails, fingernails or both, causing the nails to become discolored, thick, brittle and sometimes detached from the nail bed.

Itraconazole is marketed under the brand name Sporanox, which is manufactured by Janssen Pharmaceutica, Inc., Titusville, NJ, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson.

FDA approves new osteoporosis drug

UCSF is playing a major role in testing the first non-hormonal drug approved recently by the Food & Drug Administration to treat osteoporosis.

Considered a breakthrough in prescription medicine, the drug, called Fosamax, builds healthy bones and restores some of the bone lost as a result of osteoporosis, says clinical researcher Steven T. Harris, MD, who launched the study at UCSF in 1990.

This is the first non-hormonal drug alternative to estrogen replacement therapy for postmenopausal women, who are particularly susceptible to osteoporosis. Although studies have shown that estrogen protects against both osteoporosis and heart disease, estrogen therapy may be associated with an increased risk of breast cancer and has been linked to cancer of the uterus.

The effect of continuous treatment with Fosamax is a net increase in bone mass in women with osteoporosis after menopause.

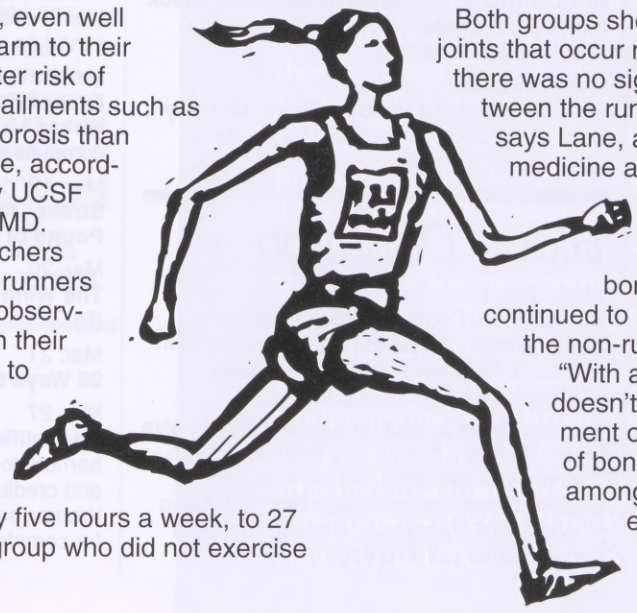
While the studies were not designed to detect fracture risk, results show a trend toward preventing fractures. Fosamax reduced the number of women who suffered new spinal fractures by 48 percent compared with women treated with a placebo. The definitive study to determine whether the drug will prevent fractures still is in progress and is being coordinated by UCSF epidemiologist Steven Cummings, MD. Results from that study are expected to be available in two years.

A progressive disease of the skeleton, osteoporosis is caused by an imbalance in the body's bone-rebuilding cycle that weakens bones and generally occurs after menopause when estrogen levels drop. As many as 25 million Americans, 80 percent of them women, may be afflicted with the disease. Each year, osteoporosis causes more than 1.3 million fractures and costs the US health care system more than $10 billion, primarily due to osteoporotic fractures of the hip, wrist and spine.

Runners at no greater risk of bone-related ailments than non-runners

People who jog regularly, even well into their sixties, do no harm to their joints and are at no greater risk of developing bone-related ailments such as osteoarthritis and osteoporosis than people who don't exercise, according to a study directed by UCSF researcher Nancy Lane, MD.

In the study, the researchers followed 28 middle-aged runners over a nine-year period, observing underlying changes in their skeletons that might lead to bone-related problems. They compared the active volunteers, who by the end of the study were exercising for nearly five hours a week, to 27 people in the same age group who did not exercise regularly.



Both groups showed changes in their joints that occur normally with age, but there was no significant difference between the runners and non-runners, says Lane, associate professor of medicine at SFGH. Both groups also lost some bone mass over the nine years but the runners had a higher bone mass to start with and continued to maintain this edge over the non-runners, Lane says.

"With aging, continuous jogging doesn't accelerate the development of osteoarthritis or the loss of bone mass," Lane says. "So among all the other benefits of exercise, it looks like we're not harming our musculoskeletal systems."

In Brief

UCSF, Stanford patient partnership discussions

UCSF and Stanford University are involved in preliminary discussions about collaboration in patient care programs. According to UCSF Chancellor Joseph Martin, MD, PhD, and Stanford President Gerhard Casper, LLM, the primary goals would be to provide cost-effective health services, improve community access to the latest advances in medical science, and ensure strong medical residency programs.

The exact nature of the collaboration between UCSF's clinical enterprise and Stanford's health services remains to be determined. However, hospital and clinical care would continue to be delivered at both campuses and other affiliated sites. The two medical schools and their faculty members would remain independent.

UCSF now a provider of senior HMOs

The UCSF Medical Group, in addition to accepting Medicare, now is a provider of two senior HMOs: Health Net Seniority Plus and Secure Horizons, a division of PacifiCare. By joining an HMO and choosing the UCSF Medical Group you have access to the many high-quality routine and advanced services available at UCSF. Senior health care services are offered in many convenient locations throughout San Francisco, including on Parnassus, at Lakeshore Plaza, Lakeside and near Mount Zion. To join UCSF and a senior HMO, call Health Net Seniority Plus at 1-800-275-4737 or Secure Horizons at 1-800-228-2144. You also may call UCSF Health Connection directly at 885-7777.

Aerobics for people with Parkinson's disease

If you have Parkinson's disease and would like to get involved in an aerobics exercise program, why not join a class offered by UCSF? The classes are conducted by a faculty member and graduate students in the Graduate Program in Physical Therapy, a joint program between UCSF and San Francisco State, in conjunction with the Parkinson's Disease Clinic, a National Parkinson Foundation Center of Excellence at UCSF. Participants should be able to walk independently or with a cane and be able to exercise for at least 20 minutes. For further information, call Marsha Melnick, PT, PhD, at 476-3452 or 338-1360.

SFGH offers free depression treatment for seniors

San Francisco General Hospital offers a free treatment program for depression in English or Spanish for people over the age of 60. Part of a study funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, the program looks at the effectiveness of different kinds of treatment for depression, says psychologist Patricia Arean, PhD. Participants will be assigned randomly to either individual therapy, group therapy or a combination of both. Patients will be seen for four to six months at SFGH with follow-up evaluations for 18 months, and will receive free taxi vouchers and $55 for time spent in follow-up evaluations. Those interested in making an appointment, should call 206-5189. For further information on the study, call 476-7439.

More news for you
on the back page

What's happening

To Our Neighbo
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events at UC Sa

MLK Week

UCSF celebrates the life and work of Martin Luther King Jr. with the following events sponsored by the MLK Commemoration Committee and those noted below. Call 476-5222 for a full schedule of events.

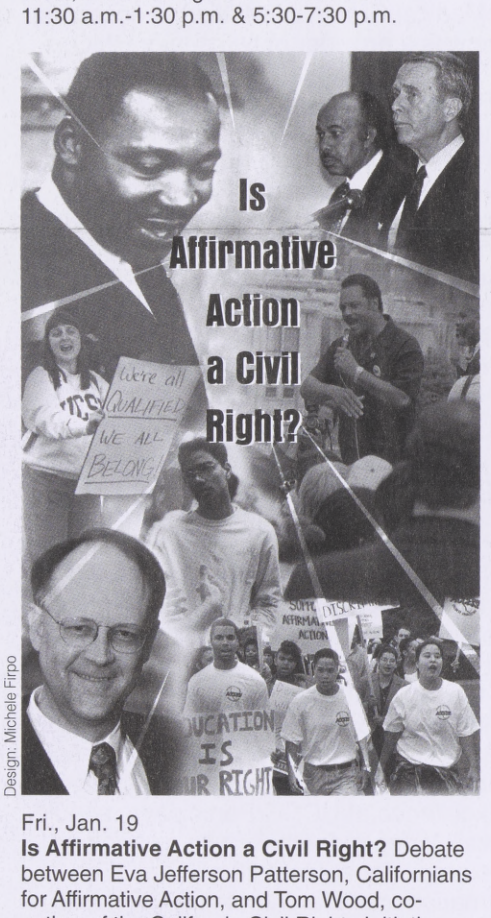
Wed., Jan. 10
Actions Affirming Diversity Issues at UCSF. A doctor, a lawyer and a minister speak to issues of affirmative action. Sponsored by Public Service Programs. Rm. 300, Health Sciences West, enter through 513 Parnassus. Noon-1 p.m. Call 476-4394.

Wed., Jan. 17
Martin Luther King Jr. Cultural Festival. Entertainment, crafts and food. Sponsored by Millberry Arts & Performances. Millberry Gym, 500 Parnassus. 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Thurs., Jan. 18
Nonviolence & Conflict Resolution. Panel discussion with youth gang members. Carr Aud., SFGH, 1001 Potrero. 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

Council of Minority Organizations Fair. Singers, junior high school bands and an orator contest. UCSF/Mount Zion Courtyard, 1600 Divisadero. 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

The Color of Fear. Film about race relations in America. Co-sponsored by Millberry Arts & Performances. Rm. 303, Health Sciences West, enter through 513 Parnassus. 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. & 5:30-7:30 p.m.



Design: Michele Firpo

Fri., Jan. 19
Is Affirmative Action a Civil Right? Debate between Eva Jefferson Patterson, Californians for Affirmative Action, and Tom Wood, co-author of the California Civil Rights Initiative. Co-sponsored by Women's Resource Cntr. Cole Hall, 513 Parnassus. Noon -1 p.m.

AIDS Programs

The UCSF AIDS Health Project (AHP) offers a variety of free support groups for residents of San Francisco, including groups for people with AIDS, who are asymptomatic HIV+, HIV+ African-American heterosexual men, HIV- with AIDS-related concerns and caregivers. Drop-in groups, monthly disability workshops, social events for HIV+ and HIV- people and meditation and self-help groups also are offered. The Project also provides free individual risk assessments & referrals. For more information, an intake interview for a particular group or an appointment for a risk assessment, visit the AHP at its new location, 400 Castro St., or call 476-3902.

Campus Tours

All tours are free and begin at 1 p.m. on the first Friday of each month. Meet in the Moffitt/Long Hospital lobby, 505 Parnassus. Sponsored by Public Service Programs. Call 476-4394.

Special Events

Fri., Jan. 26
Gladstone Distinguished Lecture: G Protein Coupled Receptors & Their Regulation. Robert J. Lefkowitz, Duke. Sponsored by the Gladstone Institute of Cardiovascular Disease. Carr Aud., SFGH, 1001 Potrero. Noon.

Thurs., Feb. 1
Life Matters: A Journey of Hope & Survival. Looking at life after cancer. Co-sponsored by Public Service Programs and UCSF/Mount Zion Cancer Center. Laurel Heights Aud., 3333 California. 7-9 p.m. Call 476-4394.

Tues., Feb. 13
UCSF Orchestra Concert. Features the winner of the First Annual UCSF Piano Competition. Free for UCSF students/$3/$5. Sponsored by Millberry Arts & Performances. Millberry Gym, 500 Parnassus. 7:30 p.m.

Sat., Feb. 24
Mission Neighborhood Health Fair. Free exams and screenings, mammograms & much more. Co-sponsored by Chicanos & Latinos for Health Education and Mission Neighborhood Health Cntr. 240 Shotwell at 16th St. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Call 753-1876.

Sat., Mar. 9
Women's Health 2000. Expo on major health issues effecting women ages 16 to 80. $35. Education Center, 513 Parnassus. 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Call 408/987-9089 to pre-register.

Community Health Education Series

Lectures sponsored by the UCSF/Mount Zion Center on Aging. Held on Saturdays at the Laurel Heights Conference Center, 3333 California. 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Call 750-5342 to register.

Feb. 3
Osteoporosis — The Silent Thief: A Prescription for Prevention & Management.

Mar. 23
The Medicare Puzzle: Making Sense of Medicare Reform, Managed Care & HMOs.

Women's Programs

Events sponsored by the Women's Resource Center. Call 476-5222 to register for workshops and for information on ongoing support groups.

Sat., Jan. 13
Workshop: Suffering & Delight. Learn to use meditation and mindfulness techniques to deal with pain and stress. $40-$50. Rm. 130, Clinical Sciences Bldg., enter through 513 Parnassus. 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Sat., Jan. 20
Workshop: Powerful Non-Defensive Communication. Learn to have a personal impact without being in a power struggle. $50. Rm. 254, Clinical Sciences Bldg., enter through 513 Parnassus. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Sat., Jan. 27
Workshop: Be Your Own Financial Planner. $40 (includes workbook). Rm. 130, Clinical Sciences Bldg., enter through 513 Parnassus. 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Tues., Jan. 30
From Danger to Dignity: The Fight for Safe Abortion. Video and discussion. Toland Hall, 533 Parnassus. Noon-1:30 p.m.

Sat., Feb. 3
Workshop: A Personal Pillow. Fabric workshop fosters more expressive quilting style. $50. Rm. 417, Nursing Bldg., enter through 513 Parnassus. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Sat., Feb. 24
Workshop: The Magic of Improv. Learn to be spontaneous and playful without fear of competition or judgement. $50. Rm. 130, Clinical Sciences Bldg., enter through 513 Parnassus. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Black Heritage Month

Events co-sponsored by the Black Caucus and those noted below. Call 476-4410 or 661-4027 for more information.

Fri., Feb. 9
No Telling What a Story Can Teach You! Noon-1 p.m. Call 476-4410 for location.

Tues., Feb. 13
What is Black Love? Explore the political, personal and social ramifications of love in the Black community. Sponsored by Women's Resource Cntr. Toland Hall, 533 Parnassus. Noon-1 p.m. Call 476-5222.

Wed., Feb. 14
The Role of Race in Violence Prevention. Sponsored by Public Service Programs. Rm. 300, Health Sciences West, enter through 513 Parnassus. Noon-1 p.m. Call 476-4394.

Fri., Feb. 16
Extending the Boundaries of Unity. African music, food and dance. Millberry Conf. Cntr., 500 Parnassus. 7-9:30 p.m.

Tues., Feb. 20
From Whores to Matriarchs: Black Women Survivors on the Edge. Performance piece sponsored by Rape Prevention Education Program. Toland Hall, 533 Parnassus. Noon-1 p.m. Call 476-5222.

Wed., Feb. 21
The 1995 Million Man March — Now What? Another Perspective. Noon-1 p.m. Call 476-4410 for location.



Anna Deveare Smith

Thurs., Feb. 22
Twilight: Los Angeles 1992. Anna Deveare Smith presents a play about race, culture and the uprising following the verdicts in the Rodney King beating trial. Sponsored by, and benefit for, Women's Resource Cntr. $25. Marines Memorial Theater, 609 Sutter. Call 476-5222.

Fri., Feb. 23
Black Nurses Symposium: Celebrating a Legacy — Graduates Making a Mark in Research, Practice & Education. $65. Cole Hall. 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Call 476-4897 for information.

Gospel Choir at UCSF Concert. $3/$5. Cole Hall, 513 Parnassus. 6:30 p.m.

Sat., Feb. 24
UCSF Black Caucus Gala VI. $40. Marriot Hotel, Burlingame. 6:30 p.m.-1 a.m.

Tues., Feb. 27
Ethiopianism, Negritude and Afrocentricity: The Elusive Quest for Black Intellectual Ethos. Noon-1 p.m. Call 476-4410 for location.

Thurs., Feb. 29
African-American Vendors Faire. Millberry Conf. Cntr., 500 Parnassus. 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

Blood Donation

Wed., Jan. 17
Blood Drive. Come give blood during January, when the nation's blood supply is at its lowest. Millberry Conference Center, 500 Parnassus. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

You don't have to wait for a blood drive to give blood. You may donate any weekday, 8 a.m.-7:45 p.m., or Saturday, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m., at UCSF's Blood Donor Center, Rm. 131, Long Hosptial, 505 Parnassus. For information & appointments call 476-6989.

Volunteer Orientation

Program to acquaint prospective volunteers with opportunities available in the Medical Center at UCSF. Meetings at Langley Porter Psychiatric Institute Auditorium, 401 Parnassus, and at UCSF/Mount Zion in Herbst Hall, 1600 Divisadero. For dates and times of Parnassus orientations call 476-1196. Call 885-7353 for UCSF/Mount Zion schedule.

Cole Hall Cinema

The Winter 1996 schedule includes "Toy Story," "Get Shorty," "Four Rooms" and "How to Make an American Quilt." Prices run $2 to $3.50. Sponsored by Millberry Arts & Performances. Cole Hall, 513 Parnassus. Call 476-2542 for schedule. (Movies subject to change.)

Brown Bag Lectures

Free lectures held weekly at noon on Wednesdays in Rm. 300, Health Sciences West, enter through 513 Parnassus (P); monthly on Thursdays in Rm. 125, UCSF/Mission Center Building (MCB), 1855 Folsom St.; and monthly on Tuesdays in Herbst Hall, UCSF/Mount Zion (MZ), 1600 Divisadero. Sponsored by Public Service Programs. Call 476-4394.

Jan. 3
Stress: Freedom Through Meditation.

Jan. 10
(See MLK Week events.) (P)

Jan. 16
Voice Disorders: The Sound of Trouble. (MZ) (Also see patient feature on facing page.)

Jan. 17
Financial Planning for Singles. (P)

Jan. 18
Simplifying & Funding the Path of Your Financial Future. (MCB)

Jan. 24
Interventional Neuroradiology: A Fantastic Voyage. Navigating the blood vessels of the brain for treatment of stroke. (P)

Jan. 31
Marvels of the Immune System. (P)

Feb. 7
How to Choose a Physician. (P)

Feb. 14
(See Black Heritage Month events.) (P)

Feb. 15
Healthy Dining: Eating Out — Cooking In. (MCB)

Feb. 20
Managed Care of Virtual Chaos … Will Computers Decide? (MZ)

Feb. 21
How Are Human Organs Allocated? (P)

Feb. 28
Advanced Directives: Who Makes Decisions When You Can't? (P)

Mar. 6
Women & Heart Disease. Women's History Month event. Call 476-5222 for complete schedule. (P)

Mar. 13
Fear of Fat: Factual or Fatuous? Women's History Month event. Call 476-5222 for complete schedule. (P)

Mar. 19
Stroke: An Ounce of Prevention Is Worth a Pound of Cure. (MZ)

Mar. 20
The Winding Road of Alzheimer's Disease. (P)

Mar. 21
25 Ways to Avoid a Lawyer. (MCB)

Mar. 27
Unqualified Success. Discussion of the barriers to achieving professional success and credibility for women and minorities. Women's History Month event. Call 476-5222 for complete schedule. (P)

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February/March 1996
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Recreation & Fitness



Make '96 a year of lower stress and more fun for yourself, friends and family by taking classes such as cooking, jewelry making, meditation, aerobics, Spanish and more at Millberry Fitness Center, 500 Parnassus. Winter class registration begins **Tues., Jan. 9.** Call 476-1115.

Institute of Healing Arts & Sciences

Series of talks and workshops on alternatives in health care and healing. Talks held on Fridays at noon in Rm. 721, Nursing Bldg., enter through 521 Parnassus. Call 330-5353 for February and March events.

Jan. 5
Mid-life: Facing Limits, New Horizons, Authenticity.

Jan. 12
Miracles, Gifts and Abilities. Learn how weakness can be transformed into strength.

Jan. 19
The Cybernetic Body Electric & Beyond. Discover an East/West medical model that integrates physical, energetic and emotive systems.

Jan. 26
Psychological & Spiritual Growth — An East/West Perspective.

Ongoing Meetings & Hotlines

Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Group: Facilitated by a social worker, this group is for those caring for someone with Alzheimer's or a related dementia. Meets the first Saturday of the month. Co-sponsored by the Alzheimer's Association. 10:30 a.m.-noon. UCSF/Mount Zion Center on Aging Alzheimer's Day Care Center, 3600 Geary Blvd. Call 1-800-660-1993.

AWAKE: AWAKE (alert, well and keeping energetic) is a support and education group for people with sleep apnea and their families. Meets the third Thursday of each month and features guest speakers on topics relating to sleep apnea, followed by time for socializing and support. Bring your CPAP equipment to have it checked by a homecare specialist. Sponsored by UCSF/Mount Zion Sleep Disorders Center. Call 885-7886.

Cancer Referral Hotline: The UCSF Cancer Referral Service enables cancer patients to place just one telephone call and learn the names of UCSF doctors specializing in the kind of treatment they need. Call 1-800-888-8664.

Look Good, Feel Better: Expert advice on makeup, wigs and the use of turbans provided for people who have undergone chemotherapy or radiation. Held every other month in 11 Long Solarium, Long Hospital, 505 Parnassus, and at UCSF/Mount Zion, 1600 Divisadero. Co-sponsored by the American Cancer Society and supported by the Donna Smith Fund. Call 476-1383 to pre-register for Parnassus meetings, 885-3693 for UCSF/Mount Zion meetings.

UCSF

University of California San Francisco
Public Affairs
3333 California Street, Suite 103
San Francisco, CA 94143-0462

An uncommon disorder caused trembling in her vocal cords, which strangled her speech.

She first thought it was only a cold.



Tom Wachs

But the raspiness in Tillie Goldsberry's voice worsened. Her speech quivered and sometimes quit. It was not a good sign for the outspoken and take-charge grandmother of five, who for the last 10 years has been a volunteer tour guide for the Santa Clara Senior Center. Whether on a day trip to Monterey or a week-long tour of midwestern states, Tillie must constantly address — often in noisy environs — the dozens of seniors under her leadership. Speaking loudly, even shouting, is part of the job.

She first experienced hoarseness six years ago during an outing to Mammoth Lakes. After her voice deteriorated more, Tillie sought medical help and speech therapy. Still, on phone calls to her grandchildren and even while on the PA system of a tour bus, she struggled to be heard. "My voice shook quite a bit," she says. "It got to the point where I thought about quitting as a tour guide. But it's something I love to do."

Last summer, a San Jose physician finally diagnosed the ailment as spasmodic dysphonia, an uncommon disorder which caused uncontrollable trembling in her vocal cords and tightening of larynx muscles — all of which strangled her speech. Tillie was referred to the UCSF/Mount Zion Voice Center, one of only some two dozen places in the country with a sophisticated array of digital, computer and video technology to diagnose and treat such voice problems. Patients typically are those with chronic voice problems — lecturers, ministers, telephone operators, aerobic instructors and football coaches — who talk a lot for a living or who habitually overuse and abuse their vocal cords. The Voice Center's team of specialists, directed by UCSF/Mount Zion chief of otolaryngology Mark Singer, MD, offers comprehensive care, ranging from surgery, if necessary, to therapy to relearn how to speak without inflaming the vocal cords.

For Tillie Goldsberry, controlling the spasms in her vocal cords was the first priority. Last September at the Voice Center, a scope was guided into Tillie's throat. A video monitor, hooked up to the scope, provided a road map to the two vocal cords — each the size of a pencil eraser. Steven Sloan, MD, a specialist in both swallowing and speech disorders, then injected a tiny amount of a drug called Botox to weaken her overactive vocal cords and, thus, tame the spasms. The result would be a more fluent voice without the annoying shakes.

A month later, Tillie returned to the center for a series of tests to detect other problems that could hamper her ability to talk. Speech pathologist and Voice Center manager Carla Gress, ScD, made a digital audio recording of Tillie's voice, which was analyzed by computer for pitch, loudness, roughness and "breathiness." This vocal stress test measures the cords' full capabilities and flexibility. Tillie then donned a small mask for an aerodynamics test to gauge air flow and whether her lungs and vocal cords were working in concert. Vocal cord vibrations were then recorded by placing two small electrodes against her throat. Finally, a vocal tract image was taken through a scope, which is attached to a miniature video camera and a computerized VCR. The Voice Center team later viewed the tape, which reveals every minute detail of vocal cord activity.

The tests showed that when she spoke, Tillie did not inhale properly, nor did she put enough breath into her words. Her neck and shoulder muscles also showed too much tension, which caused her to squeeze out sounds rather than let her words flow easily. These habits, says Gress, may stem from Tillie's attempt to compensate for the problems caused by the spasms in her vocal cords.

Gress now works with Tillie on proper breathing techniques and exercises to relax the head and neck muscles. The combination of the drug injection and the speech therapy is having remarkable results, says Tillie. In an audio tape recorded during her first visit to UCSF/Mount Zion, Tillie's voice is unsteady and her words fade in mid-sentence. Now, she can hold an hour-long phone conversation and be heard clearly on the other end. She may require more shots of Botox every several months if the quivers in her voice return. "It is all worthwhile," she says. "I need my voice."

Even during the years she struggled with her speech, Tillie never really skipped a beat from her activities. Whether helping with the nutrition program or taking aerobic classes, she remained a regular at the Santa Clara Senior Center. She managed to direct a fashion show fund-raiser and lead several tours. Now, however, with that familiar crispness back in her voice, she looks forward to the big summer seniors bus trip to Colorado and Utah. It's a 17-day adventure, and she plans to do a lot of talking.

— Andy Evangelista

For more information on the Voice Center at UCSF/Mount Zion, call 885-7392.

To Our Neighbors
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Voice Center returns crispness to tour guide's speech

A cure for most disfiguring nail infections

FDA approves new osteoporosis drug

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To Our Neighbors

Children sensitive to stress get sick more often

Most children deal with life's ups and downs with no serious problems, but certain youngsters are so sensitive to stress that it causes them to be sick more often, according to a new report by UCSF researchers.

"Previous research has shown that psychological stress is not the same for all children, but we haven't had any clear markers that identified the ones at risk, until now," says W. Thomas Boyce, MD, lead author of the report and director of the UCSF Division of Behavioral and Developmental Pediatrics.

Boyce hopes that in the future, teachers, including those in day care, will be able to use the study's information to help stress-prone children deal with their anxieties before they lead to more serious health problems.

In the study, 236 children, ages three to five, were tested for physical responses to psychological stress, such as increases in heart rate and blood pressure or a decrease in immune function. Ongoing work by several research groups suggests that these physical changes, as well as others, undermine the body's resistance to disease.

"The good news is that factors in the school or home environment appear to play a major role in determining illness in these biologically sensitive kids, and these are things we can often change and control," Boyce says.

Boyce and colleagues found that the highest incidence of illness occurred in youngsters in the biologically sensitive group who experienced high levels of environmental stress. The study also showed something surprising: youngsters in the sensitive group had the lowest rate of illness — among all study participants — when there was low stress in the home environment.

Routine treatment of high cholesterol in healthy women questioned

There is no evidence to support routine treatment of high blood cholesterol in otherwise healthy women, according to a study by Judith Walsh, MD, MPH, director of the outpatient medical clinic at UCSF/Mount Zion Medical Center.

Analyzing information from nine separate studies, researchers found that lowering high levels of blood cholesterol does decrease the chance that women with known heart disease will suffer a fatal heart attack, much the same as in men. Surprisingly, however the team also found that healthy women — whatever their age — with high blood cholesterol were no more likely to develop heart disease or die of a heart attack than healthy women whose high cholesterol levels were lowered by diet or drugs.

"Doctors see a lot of perfectly healthy women with high cholesterol, and our findings suggest that bringing the levels down really does not change their risk for heart diseases, " says Walsh, a former Veteran's Affairs research fellow.

Most studies on the effects of lowering cholesterol have included only men, Walsh points out.

On breath and exercise

The UCSF departments of Physiological Nursing and Medicine are seeking participants for a study looking at treatments for shortness of breath in people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). The study will look at the effectiveness of exercise programs on shortness of breath, exercise capacity and quality of life. To participate, you must be over 40 years of age, have a diagnosis of COPD, emphysema or chronic bronchitis, and experience shortness of breath with daily activities. Upon study completion, volunteers will receive $100. For further information, call the Dyspnea Research Office at 476-5375.

Green light for Laurel Heights

It's full speed ahead for Laurel Heights now that the deadline has passed for any legal challenge to the latest EIR (Environmental Impact Report). The UC Regents already had approved the EIR at their meeting last September. Under the approved new long-range, five-year occupancy plan, Laurel Heights will become the new Center for Social, Behavioral and Policy Sciences.

At risk for stroke?

If you have diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease or elevated blood cholesterol, or if you smoke, drink alcohol excessively or are obese, you may be at risk for stroke. Stroke, the third leading cause of death in the U.S., leaves many survivors disabled. Yet, stroke can be prevented. Call the UCSF Stroke Service at 476-7489 for a free brochure that outlines ways to lower your risk.